

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PHNOM 06466 081329Z

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ACTION SS-30

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R 081210Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6039

INFO CINCPAC

COMUSSAG NKP

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 6466

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS MOPS SREF EAID CB

SUBJECT: CONSERVATION WITH MARSHAL LON NOL ON MILITARY SUBJECTS

STATE ALSO PASS INFO SECDEF

1. IN THE COURSE OF TETE-A-TETE LUNCHEON WITH LON NOL I KEPT THE CONVERSATION LARGELY CONFINED TO URGENT MILITARY PROBLEMS WHICH NEED HIS ATTENTION. I PRESSED HIM HARD ON NEED TO GIVE YOUNG AND COMPETENT OFFICERS MORE RESPONSIBILITY AND FIRST STEP WOULD BE TO GET RID OF SOME DEADWOOD AMONG OLDER GENERAL OFFICERS. I KNOW THAT TOM ENDERS HAD BEEN PUSHING THIS LINE PRIOR TO MY ARRIVAL AND I SAID I WOULD HOPE MARSHAL COULD COME UP WITH 5-6 SPECIFIC NAMES OF GENERALS WHO ARE NO LONGER FULLY EFFECTIVE AND WHO COULD BE RETIRED. LON NOL SAID HE HAD ASKED GENERAL SOSTHENE FOR SUCH A LIST. SPEAKING QUITE FRANKLY, I SAID THAT TIME HAD COME TO TAKE ACTION AND NOT MERELY "CONSIDER" REMVOING SOME OF THE INCOMPETENT GENERALS FROM ACTIVE SERVICE. IF HE HAS NOT TAKEN ANY ACTION BY NEXT WEEK I WILL RAISE IT WITH HIM AGAIN BECAUSE FANK NEEDS A SHOT IN THE ARM AND WEEDING OUT SOME OF THE LOSERS AND MORE CORRUPT GENERALS WOULD BE A WELCOME SIGNAL FOR THE MORE DYNAMIC FANK SENIOR OFFICERS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PHNOM 06466 081329Z

2. I ALSO URGED THE MARSHAL TO GIVE PRIORITY TO FILLING THE 1ST AND 7TH DIVISION RATHER THAN ACTIVATING A NEW 9TH "PRESIDENTIAL DIVISION" WHICH HAS BEEN THE MARSHAL'S LATEST TOY. I STRESSED THE NEED FOR THE 7TH DIVISION TO GET THE NECESSARY MANPOWER TO ATTACK ON ROUTE 5 NORTH OF PHNOM PENH THEREBY TAKING SOME PRESSURE OFF THE LOVEK DEFENDERS. THE PRESIDENT AGREED AND POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD ALREADY INSTRUCTED THE 48TH BRIGADE TO REMAIN IN THE 1ST DIVISION RATHER THAN BE TRANSFERRED TO THE 9TH AS HE HAD ORIGINALLY CONTEMPLATED.

3. ON LOVEK, THE PRESIDENT HELD SOME ERRONEOUS VIEWS WHICH WERE CLEARLY THE RESULT OF INACCURATE INFORMATION FORWARDED TO HIM BY HIS SUBORDINATES. FOR EXAMPLE, HE AFFIRMED THAT REPLACEMENTS HAD BEEN SENT TO LOVEK DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS. I CORRECTED THIS IMPRESSION, POINTING OUT THAT ACCORDING TO INFORMATION I HAD RECEIVED EARLIER IN THE DAY, LESS THAN 60 REPLACEMENTS HAD BEEN SENT TO LOVEK BY HELICOPTER OVER THE LAST THREE DAYS. THIS IS CLEARLY NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE UP FOR THE DEFENDERS' LOSSES. I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE TRAINING CENTER AT LOVEK HAD NOT BEEN RETAKEN BY THE 80TH BRIGADE AS ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY BY THE GKR SPOKESMAN. LON NOL ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GKR SPOKESMAN HAD "STRETCHED THE TRUTH" AND THAT FANK HAD MERELY GAINED SOME GROUND IN THE FORMER TRAINING CENTER AREA. I STRESSED AGAIN THE NEED FOR FANK TO HOLD LOVEK BECAUSE 40,000 CIVILIANS ARE PRESENTLY HOLED UP IN THE ENCLAVE. SINCE WE WERE ALONE, I SAID QUITE CANDIDLY THAT DEFENSE OF OUDONG-KOMPONG LUONG-LOVEK ENCLAVE WAS LARGELY RESULT OF HIS SPECIFIC ORDER AND FAILURE OF FANK TO STAND AT LOVEK COULD TARNISH MARSHAL'S REPUTATION AMONG KHMERS. HE ADMITTED THAT HE HAD ORDERED RECAPTURE OF OUDONG, AND FROM THE MAPS HE BROUGHT OUT AND HIS COMMENTS IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO AVOID A DEBACLE AT LOVEK. HOPEFULLY, HE WILL KEEP UP THE NECESSARY PRESSURE ON FANK TO GET RESULTS.

4. I ALSO RAISED THE DETERIORATING SITUATION ON HIGHWAY 4 NORTHEAST OF REAM. I SAID THAT I COULD UNDER-

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PHNOM 06466 081329Z

STAND THE DIFFICULTY OF SMALL OUTPOSTS ALONG THAT HIGHWAY TO WITHSTAND CONCENTRATED ENEMY ATTACKS, BUT IF DEFENDERS HAD TO WITHDRAW, IT WAS IMPERATIVE THEY DESTROY THE 105S OVER LAST COUPLE OF DAYS AND KAF HAD TO BE CALLED IN TO DESTROY THE HOWITZERS. I OPINED THAT GENERAL SOSTHENE MAY WELL COME TO HIM LATER IN THE DAY TO REQUEST HIS PERMISSION FOR WITHDRAWAL OF SOME OF THESE OUTPOSTS ON ROUTE 4 AND I HOPED HE WOULD

ACQUIESCE. THE MARSHAL REPLIED THAT THIS WITHDRAWAL MADE SENSE TO HIM AND HE WOULD SO INFORM SOSTHENE.

5. THE REST OF THE CONVERSATION WAS LARGELY DEVOTED TO THE NEED OF GETTING MORE RECRUITS INTO FANK AND ASSIGNING TERRITORIALS TO THE INTERVENTION UNITS WHICH DO MOST OF THE FIGHTING. DESPITE THE CANDOR OF THE CONVERSATION I FELT THAT THE MARSHAL APPRECIATED HONEST ADVICE DESIGNED TO HELP HIM KEEP CONTROL OF THE SITUATION.

6. BEFORE LEAVING I SAID THAT I WAS GOING TO KAMPOT TOMORROW WITH MEMBERS OF MY STAFF WHERE FANK HAD WON THE FIRST VICTORY SINCE I HAD COME TO THE KHMER REPUBLIC. THE ENEMY WAS APPARENTLY WITHDRAWING FROM KAMPOT AND I FELT IT WAS TIME TO GIVE FANK FORCES REMAINING IN KAMPOT A PAT ON THE BACK AND INTRODUCE SOME CIVILIAN ASSISTANCE FOR THE REFUGEES AND THOSE REMAINING IN KAMPOT. THOSE WHO ASSURED THE DEFENSE OF KAMPOT MUST FEEL THAT THEIR SACRIFICES WERE NOT IN VAIN AND I THEREFORE HOPED THAT WE COULD BRING SOME RICE, ROOFING MATERIALS AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE INTO KAMPOT TO NORMALIZE LIVING CONDITIONS IN THAT ENCLAVE. THE MARSHAL WHO WAS AWARE OF MY MANY TRAVELS IN THE PROVINCES, VOICED HIS APPRECIATION FOR OUR EFFORTS TO REWARD THE DEFENDERS IN KAMPOT BY SWIFT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

DEAN

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECDEF.

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